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# True Gospel Baptist Church

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# True Gospel Baptist Church

by Janel Boyles De Rondon

On Sunday, September 13, 2015 at 11:00a.m. I attended a service at a Baptist church called the True Gospel Baptist Church. The church is located at 1106 W Street NW, Washington DC 20009 and I went with my grandmother. I am an atheist so it was difficult for me to be there but that's the church that my grandmother belongs to and it was easier with her around. The pastor that resided over the service was a man by the name of Reverend Larry E. Hentz.

The church is very quaint and it's a small church, nothing too big or fancy. The outside appearance of the church is brick and it has a cross at the highest point of the building. The inside is engulfed in the color red. All the benches are covered in a deep red. There is even a red cloth material on the podium for the pastor and where the choir sings. The main thing that I took notice to was the large cross hanging behind the choir. That was my main focal point.

When I first arrived, there were ushers outside greeting everyone and giving them pamphlets for the day's service. The people who attend that church are local people from the community. It's filled with a mixed age and mixed gender of African Americans. Everyone was dressed formally, the men and boys wore suits and the women and girls wore dresses. I felt comfortable attending and I didn't feel out of place. I was confused about what was actually going on and I needed my grandmother's help

with informing me about the procedures.

There weren't too many people there because the church isn't so big. However, they do welcome new people with open arms. I felt comfortable enough to break away from my grandmother and try to talk to other people. Despite my confusion, I began to understand why people love to join churches like this one; it brings a community together, and allows people to worship together their same God together without any judgment.

The service began really subtle. The pastor began with a story about his family, about a conversation he had with his wife and children. I was surprised because I thought it would be more dramatic than just a story about himself. During his story he made jokes about his talk with his family. The story did have a point, however; he continued to talk about children and they way they are growing up today in our society. During his speech he continuously said "amen" and I then realized that he is trying to connect everything he says to God.

During the service, the congregation was interactive; continuously speaking out loudly. Saying little words such as "amen" and "thank God". They were in a trance with everything that he was saying as though they could feel every single one of his words. There was a focus to the service and it was from a scripture in the Bible from Ezekiel. We stood when he read the passages from Ezekiel 3:8 and 3:9.

The pastor alluded to many other preachers and friends of his about what he would base his service on and what he'll be preaching about.

This service was definitely one of ritual, the pastor knew what he wanted to preach and the choir behind him knew what was going to happen next. Everyone related with the service, especially when he was talking about being "hard headed" and how everyone has to deal with a hard headed child. He was really honing in on children and the parenting styles of the adults in the church. He made a joke about his wife having to deal with the fact that he was hard headed himself, and everyone laughed. It was a joyous moment and everyone was listening in as though they would be remiss if they were to miss what he was saying.

After the pastor gave his sermon and scripture, the choir began their praise and worship singing. It was to get everyone in the holy mood and ready to begin church. After the choir it was time for the junior choir to begin their song and they had a little help from the guests. We had to pay our offerings which was first confusing to me, then I learned that offerings, also known as tithing, goes completely to the church and it's to help the church further develop and grow into a bigger establishment. In the Bible it says the God wants each person to give what they can on the first of every week, so that's why tithing is put into place, so people are able to give something to the church.

The main thing that I noticed in the church was the presence of the color red. Red is meant to symbolize God's presence and I thought it was interesting that they mainly focused on that one specific color and that

they knew they wanted God to be with them during each service. It's also the known as the color of the church so it would make sense that that would be their main color as opposed to other colors with religious significance.

Because it was a Baptist church, there weren't many significant symbols as a Catholic church may have. It did have a single large cross behind the pastor, but other than that it wasn't very decorated in symbols. There was a stained glass window towards the entrance but even that didn't have anything of significance within it.

When the service ended, we had the adult choir perform once more for a closing song that everyone stood up and joined in on. Once that was over, we had a final message by the pastor, as though it were a closing message for any last thoughts he would like you to leave with and people were interactive during this part as they were in the beginning. Announcements were made about anything coming up and people part of the ministry were able to say what they needed. Then we finally dismissed and people walked out together discussing the service. •

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